

# The Long Haul: Rebooting U.S. Security Cooperation in Iraq

by [Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights)

Jan 22, 2015

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Knights \(/experts/michael-knights\)](/experts/michael-knights)

Michael Knights is the Jill and Jay Bernstein Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and cofounder of the Militia Spotlight platform, which offers in-depth analysis of developments related to Iran-backed militias.



## In-Depth Reports

The challenge posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) has created some strange dynamics, among them the shared interest of the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran in "degrading and defeating" the Sunni jihadist group. But this shared interest should not be viewed as an opportunity for fuller cooperation and warmer ties; rather, it presents a grave risk. Iran and its Shiite proxies have been seeking to exploit the chaos next door to effectively take over Iraq's government and security sector. A country of some 36 million inhabitants could thus fall under Iran's sway.

The United States and its Western partners must now work simultaneously to counter ISIS advances and ensure Iran doesn't gain the upper hand as a potential Iraqi partner. This mission, first of all, must be grounded in a long-term U.S. strategy and commitment to the health and recovery of the Iraqi state.

In this new Institute study, Michael Knights, a longtime expert on Iraq and Iran, discusses the ways in which the United States can establish itself as a trusted partner for the Iraqis. Taking well-considered steps now will help forestall an ISIS resurgence down the road -- and prevent Iran from widening its already vast regional influence.

## THE AUTHOR

[Michael Knights \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/knights-michael\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/knights-michael) is a Lafer fellow at The Washington Institute, specializing in the political and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and the Gulf Arab states. He has traveled into Iraq annually to support and meet with Iraqi and Kurdish ministries, local government leaders, and security forces; he has worked in every Iraqi province and most of the hundred districts of Iraq.

Dr. Knights received his PhD in Iraqi military history at the Department of War Studies, King's College, London. His analysis appears regularly in outlets including the *Washington Post*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, *the West Point Sentinel*, *Politico*, and *Jane's IHS*; he also provides expert testimony at congressional hearings.

His recent publications on Iraq include:

- [ISIL's Political-Military Power in Iraq \(https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/isils-political-military-power-in-iraq\)](https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/isils-political-military-power-in-iraq)

(West Point Combating Terrorism Center, 2014).

- [Conducting Field Research on Terrorism in Iraq](http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415609319/) (<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415609319/>) (Routledge, 2013)
- [Rising to Iran's Challenge: GCC Military Capability and U.S. Security Cooperation](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/rising-to-irans-challenge-gcc-military-capability-and-u.s.-security-coopera) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/rising-to-irans-challenge-gcc-military-capability-and-u.s.-security-coopera>) (Washington Institute, 2013)
- [The Iraqi Security Forces: Local Context and U.S. Assistance](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-iraqi-security-forces-local-context-and-u.s.-assistance) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-iraqi-security-forces-local-context-and-u.s.-assistance>) (Washington Institute, 2011)
- [Iran's Influence in Iraq: Countering Tehran's Whole-of-Government Approach](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-influence-in-iraq-countering-tehrans-whole-of-government-approach) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-influence-in-iraq-countering-tehrans-whole-of-government-approach>) (Washington Institute, 2011)
- [Kirkuk in Transition](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kirkuk-in-transition-confidence-building-in-northern-iraq) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kirkuk-in-transition-confidence-building-in-northern-iraq>) (Washington Institute, 2010)

---

## RECOMMENDED

---



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis

May 4, 2024

◆  
Michael Knights,  
Amir al-Kaabi,  
Hamdi Malik

(/policy-analysis/tracking-anti-us-strikes-iraq-and-syria-during-gaza-crisis)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### Nuclear Agency Chief Visits Iran: Expectations and Next Steps

May 3, 2024

◆  
Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/nuclear-agency-chief-visits-iran-expectations-and-next-steps)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## The Islamic Resistance in Iraq Collates a 200-Day Attack Scoreboard

May 3, 2024

Michael Knights

(/policy-analysis/islamic-resistance-iraq-collates-200-day-attack-scoreboard)

### TOPICS

Arab & Islamic Politics (/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics)

Democracy & Reform (/policy-analysis/democracy-reform)

Military & Security (/policy-analysis/military-security)

### REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Iran (/policy-analysis/iran)

Iraq (/policy-analysis/iraq)